

REMARKS

Claims 11, 14, 17, 20, 23 and 26-28 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 11 is amended and claims 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24 and 25 are canceled. Support for the amendment can be found, at least, at page 30, lines 6-25, page 23, line 8 to page 26, line 5 and Figs. 1-4 of the specification. No new matter is added.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for allowing claims 26-28.

Claims 11 and 14-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,482,558 to Watanabe et al. ("Watanabe") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,488,497 to Buckley et al. ("Buckley"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 11, as amended, recites that each column member has a plurality of individual supporting parts in the vertical direction; that the supporting parts are arranged to form sets having a common vertical height, the supporting parts of the sets not being connected to each other but forming a common horizontal plane; the supporting parts all have the shape of a circular arc having a center angle of 20° to 100°; the supporting parts and the column member are a monolithic piece of a same material; and that there are three or more respective circular arc-shaped supporting parts in each common horizontal plane. Watanabe and Buckley fail to disclose all of these features.

The Office Action asserts that Watanabe discloses three or more column members, in the form of support arms and rods 41-44 (Fig. 5 of Watanabe). The Office Action also asserts that elements 5A and 5B of Watanabe disclose the recited supporting parts having a center angle of 20°-100°. However, claim 11 recites that each column member has a plurality of individual supporting parts. By contrast, Fig. 5 of Watanabe shows that the supporting parts are stretched between two of the alleged column members. In Watanabe, the alleged supporting part is formed by stretching an element between two of the alleged columns, rather than the supporting part being formed only out of the single column. As such, Watanabe does

not disclose that each column member has a plurality of individual supporting parts in the vertical direction, as recited in claim 11.

Second, Fig. 5 of Watanabe shows only two alleged supporting parts. However, claim 11 recites that there are three or more respective circular arc-shaped supporting parts in each common horizontal plane. Watanabe does not disclose such a feature.

Additionally, Buckley does not supply the missing subject matter as recited. Therefore, the combination of Watanabe and Buckley fails to disclose or suggest the features of claim 11. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 11, and its dependent claims, is respectfully requested.

Claims 20-25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Watanabe in view of Buckley and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,474,987 to Nakai et al. ("Nakai"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 20-25 depend from claim 11. Nakai fails to disclose the subject matter lacking in Watanabe and Buckley with respect to independent claim 11. Accordingly, claims 20-25 are in condition for allowance based on their dependence from claim 11, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 20-25 is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 11, 14, 17, 20 and 23 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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